

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
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 (FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

1. Soccer is the best known and the most popular of all sports played in the USSR. Ice hockey is probably the most popular winter sport played and watched in the cities. Volleyball and basketball enjoy nationwide popularity. Gorotki—a form of bowls—is popular with the laboring class and older people. Malenkov himself is fond of this game. Ski-jumping is not popular because of the Soviet Government's primary interest in cross-country and trail work on skis as athletic exercise with a military usefulness. For this reason, downhill skiing and slalom racing have only a limited popularity; "they have no military value". The Government wants a high percentage of the population to participate in either observation or competition.
2. The sporting and economic aspects of rifle and shotgun marksmanship are considered secondary by the Soviet Government to the obvious military applications of this athletic exercise. The Committee of Physical Culture and Sport desires to see firearms enthusiasts strive toward ultimate excellence with the military rifle, the automatic rifle, the light machine-gun, the rifle with telescopic sight, pistols, and shotguns. That is to say, if the sports achievement records in the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport could be examined, it would be learned that probably 80 percent of the effort put into marksmanship is for the purpose of developing among the population a military proficiency in this sport.
3. The national marksmanship program has been worked out by a special committee on physical culture and sports in the Ministry of Defense. [redacted] the results of civil matches can be found regularly in Soviet Sport, the weekly sports newspaper.

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4. [redacted] indoor swimming pools in the Soviet Union is of the TsDKA (Red Army Central Club) Baseyn No. 1 and No. 2, built in the late 1930s in Moscow. Because of its standard 25-meter length, all competitive swimming took place in the No. 2 pool. Pool No. 1 was 33 meters long, and professional swimmers always wondered at its odd length, speculating that the designer evidently had a poor understanding of swimming and swimming pools. Pool No. 1 was used, therefore, as a practice pool. The establishment of this central club, now the TsDSA (Soviet Army Central Club), had been an earlier move on the part of the Government to leave military personnel with no time for politics. 25X1
5. [redacted]
6. In the winter of 1939-1940 [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] it was official Army policy to keep the military sports fabric strong through the expedient of not sending the better athletes to the fighting front.
7. At this same time, the TsDKA requested by letter, distributed through Army administrative channels, that all new recruits in the Army be permitted to engage actively in sports and that experienced athletes be permitted to maintain a high level of athletic proficiency. It was Army policy in general [redacted] that proficient athletes be encouraged and pampered as much as possible.
8. All young men with some record of achievement in sports who are called upon to do their military service are watched and their records noted, when and where possible, by the TsDSA, Navy, and Dynamo clubs. Consequently, there is considerable rivalry among the military and security services in their efforts to recruit promising young athletes. Young civilians who have already attained some degree of fame as athletes are wooed by the services, who often appoint these youths officers directly from civilian life. This is especially true of the Army and Dynamo clubs. Once in uniform as lieutenants, the young men are, thus, spared the rigors and time of basic training. Instead, they continue to engage in their favorite sports activities. The Army and MVD/KGB grant many privileges to these young men, even the ones who are not commissioned. A youth who is an athlete, whether private or NCO, may live at home instead of on post. In short, they have all the privileges which go with the uniform, but few of the responsibilities. 25X1
9. The 1939 Soviet war against Finland, intended by the Government to be a blitzkrieg attack, was explained to the Soviet peoples as a defensive war which had to be fought because of the military threat posed to the USSR by neighboring Finland. [redacted] contemporaries were in a quandary 25X1 as to the Government's explanation supporting the Finland campaign and the belief of these young people that the reasons given for the war were, at best, weak.
10. This was particularly so because the Soviet Union "was not really prepared for that war". The USSR met strong resistance, mainly because, [redacted] 25X1
- a. The war meant a military campaign to be waged under conditions of severe winter cold, when troops must be accustomed beforehand to the rigorous living and fighting conditions.

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- b. Arctic living and cold-weather movement posed severe problems of physical survival.
- c. To conduct such a campaign successfully, ski troops were essential.
11. Finland, thus, turned out to be a rugged competitor for the poorly equipped Soviet troops. From the beginning of the fighting, there had been a desperate need for experienced skiers. The entire Soviet Union was canvassed by the Army for good skiers. Special ski units were hastily organized and moved to the front. And despite the Red Army's previous intensive sports program, the Finnish campaign showed the defense training and physical preparedness of the Red Army to be "pitifully inadequate".
 12. The war of 1941-1945 called a halt to most sports activities, but not completely. All athletics were abandoned between summer 1941 and the time the Germans were stopped and repulsed, toward the end of 1942. [redacted] "sporting life in the Soviet Union practically died during this period". It was only in 1943, when victory first came into sight, that the Government was willing to relax the restrictions on time devoted to sports. 25X1
 13. Despite the fact that the war was by no means over in 1943, sports useful in military training were revived. These included the throwing of hand grenades, the running of obstacle courses, and cross-country runs. The Government also paid particular attention to ski training.
 14. "The preparation of youthful Soviet citizens as cannon fodder" as a government policy has since been drastically revised. The officially-sponsored sports training program cannot be considered by the West as anything other than a highly specialized business. By comparison, sporting activities in the free world are entirely different in their spirit and their manner. Whereas sports in the free world mean spontaneous exercise and healthy competition, sports for young people in the USSR serve primarily a military purpose: they fill a national need for physical preparedness to wage successful war.
 15. This aggressive and military sports program was conceived, practically speaking, with the birth of the Soviet system in 1917-1918. Its improvement was continued throughout the years of the political and economic development of the USSR, and it was put to work to produce results for military purposes. The Government has seen to it right along that the best sports achievements were properly rewarded with fitting trophies, such as personal medals and other decorations. No loving-cups are awarded in the Soviet Union, "as these cannot be worn on one's breast". With many of these awards go monetary compensations. The fact that a financial incentive system for these otherwise "amateur" sportsmen exists is seldom realized or appreciated outside the USSR.
 16. The basis of this military type of sports training is the "Ready for Work and Defense" program (GTO-Gotov Trudu y Oborone), instituted throughout the country in the 1930s. Since Party activities in the USSR interfere directly or indirectly with all forms of human activity, sports are in no way exempted from Party control. It was for the purpose of supervising and controlling sports that a special organization was created in the 1930s; it is the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport, directly responsible to the Council of Ministers of the USSR. This Committee even has a special branch for the intelligence and security exploitation of sports.
 17. The GTO has two programs or phases: the First Degree (elementary qualification) and the Second Degree (advanced qualification). In watching young people qualify for the GTO First Degree rating, one can readily appreciate its military character. Hand grenade throwing, for example, is an excellent illustration of what "sports" competence the Soviet youth must develop. Rifle marksmanship, skiing, and military watermanship (treading water while fully clothed) qualifying tests must also be entered and passed. Proficiency in ordinary sports such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball is not required in order to be awarded one's GTO First Degree certificate.
 18. All boys and girls, at the age of 16 or 17, must pass the GTO First Degree qualifying tests. Qualification is essential for entry into military service, for both

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males and females. Komsomol and other Party organizations push their local GTO programs hard in order to draw favorable attention to themselves from the next higher political echelon.

19. Candidates for induction into the armed forces who do not have a GTO qualification entered into their pre-induction records must complete the qualification tests prior to entry into military service. It is the responsibility of each voyenkomat to insure that each inductee has completed these tests. All schools, including the middle and vocational (trudovaya rezervnaya shkola), the engineering (tekhnikum) and normal (institut), are provided with the facilities for this testing, and run the students through the tests during their senior year of middle school or its equivalent in the other schools. 25X1
20. The Voroshilov Marksman award (Voroshilovskiy Strelok) was introduced for military purposes in the mid-1930s to decorate not only adult rifle marksmen but also youths from the age of 15 years on. The award was abolished later, circa 1941, because of Voroshilov's fall from grace. The medal then became known simply as the Sniper's Badge, and now has several levels of award (First Class, Second Class, etc.).
21.

Like many things in the USSR, however, even these certificates are available on a free market. For a price of 30 or 40 rubles, one can purchase a First or Second Degree certificate, properly filled out, from clerical employees who work in local offices of the Sports Committee from one end of the USSR to the other. 25X1

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22. At the Military Institute of Foreign Languages, the students were physically unprepared to devote an exhausting length of time to sports. Although they were, thus, reluctant to compete in sports, they were required circa 1948 to enter elimination competitions for the big national sports events. Sick-call and other subterfuges were tried to avoid sports practice. One youth begged to be excused from participation, but the institute physician refused to grant this permission. The lad took part in a ski race in Sokolniki Park, Moscow, dropped at the finish line, and died from exhaustion. This incident threw a scare into the officials managing the GTO program, and thereafter persons seeking to be excused from grueling sports events have been granted their requests. 25X1
23. After World War II, a new intensification in the Government's sports training program was marked by the appearance of a whole new series of athletic awards, so many that No sport was excluded from the field of praise, from rifle sharp-shooter to superior volleyball player through a "master of sport" award and special gold medals. In order to win the "master of sport" award, a competing athlete must hold the GTO Second Degree and then win the All-Union championship in at least one sport. Each sport was given lavish consideration, because of the need to arouse the interest of the new generation 25X1 in international competitive sporting events which, in turn, marked a turning point in this specialized field of foreign political relations.

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